

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07

INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 SAB-01 SAM-01 DODE-00

PM-03 H-02 L-02 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 CU-02 OMB-01 AF-06 IO-10 /104 W

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P R 021508Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3344

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SY, IZ

SUBJECT: SYRIAN LABOR DAY CELEBRATIONS

1. SUMMARY: LABOR DAY FESTIVITIES IN SYRIA EXTOLLED
ASAD'S LEADERSHIP BUT PRESIDENT HIMSELF MADE NO PUBLIC
PRONOUNCEMENT. ANTI-IRAQI MATERIAL WAS PROMINENT THEME.
END SUMMARY.

2. SYRIAN LABOR DAY FESTIVITIES CENTERED AROUND MASSIVE
FOUR-HOUR PARADE TELEVISED NATIONALLY FROM DOWNTOWN
DAMASCUS AND SPEECHES BY BAATH PARTY REGIONAL COMMAND
MEMBERS. PRESIDENT ASAD, REGIONAL COMMAND AND DIPLOMATIC
CORPS REVIEWED ENTIRE PARADE.

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3. RC MEMBER MUHAMMAD JABIR BAJBUJ, SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF BAATH PARTY, DELIVERED PRINCIPAL ADDRESS WHICH CONTAINED, IN ADDITION TO STANDARD LABOR DAY ORATORY, STRONG ATTACK ON IRAQ. PRESS REPORTED THAT MARCHERS SHOUTED SLOGAN "OH BAGHDAD, REVOLT, REVOLT, LET SADDAM FOLLOW NURI" (NURI AL-SAID).

4. MAY 2 DAMASCUS PRESS ALSO COVERED THE POLITICAL "DEBUT" OF ASAD'S BROTHER AND NEWLY ELECTED REGIONAL COMMAND MEMBER, RIF'AT AL-ASAD. HE DELIVERED SPEECH TO NATIONAL STUDENT FEDERATION EXTOLLING ACHIEVEMENTS OF BAATH PARTY IN FIELD OF EDUCATION, THEN LASHED OUT AGAINST IRAQI REGIME'S "FASCIST" POLICIES AND "SURRENDER OF ARABISTAN" TO IRAN.

5. COMMENT: IN CONTRAST TO SADAT'S MAJOR ADDRESS AT ASSIUT, ASAD REMAINED SILENT THROUGHOUT DAMASCUS CELEBRATIONS. HE WAS, HOWEVER, VERY MUCH THE FOCUS OF ATTENTION BOTH DURING PARADE AND IN SUBSEQUENT EFFUSIVE MEDIA COVERAGE. PARADE PROVIDED DRAMATIC EVIDENCE OF DEGREE TO WHICH "CULT OF PERSONALITY" HAS DEVELOPED HERE. OF THE THOUSANDS OF PHOTOGRAPHS AND LIKELNSSES CARRIED BY MARCHERS, ALL WE OBSERVED WERE OF ASAD WITH EXCEPTION A HANDFULL OF MAHMOUD HADID, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL LABOUR FEDERATION.

6. SYRIAN LEADERSHIP ALSO LOST NO TIME, FOLLOWING ITS ANNOUNCED WITHDRAWAL FROM ARAB LEAGUE EUPHRATES WATER DISCUSSIONS APRIL 30 ON GROUNDS OF CONTINUED IRAQI PROPAGANDA ATTACKS, IN LAUNCHING BARRAGE OF INSULTS TOWARD BAGHDAD. FACT THAT EVERY SPEECH AND EDITORIAL CONTAINED ANTI-IRAQI REFERENCES COULD ONLY HAVE BEEN SARG-INSPIRED AND COORDINATED.

MURPHY

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